



Maricopa County

News Release

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Feasting on Food Safety

How to avoid foodborne illness during Thanksgiving and the holidays

Thanksgiving dinner is a time to enjoy friends, family and good food. Keep your fantastic feast from turning into a foodborne fiasco by following simple safety measures when preparing your food.

“Most people who become sick have eaten contaminated foods or come in contact with someone who has a foodborne illness,” says John Kolman, director of the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. “It only takes a small amount of contaminant to make a person sick. You can help prevent foodborne illnesses by following proper food handling and cooking procedures.”

Hidden dangers of bacterial contamination in perishable foods are often forgotten. Salmonella and C. jejuni bacteria are commonly found in poultry and are among the most common sources of diarrheal disease in the U.S. As you prepare your holiday meal, you are encouraged to put these four easy to remember tips **-Clean, Separate, Cook and Chill-** into practice in order to keep food safe.

Clean

- ✓ One of the easiest things you can do to prevent foodborne illness is keep your hands clean. “Cross contamination using the hands of one of the biggest mistakes people make when cooking during the holidays,” says David Ludwig, division manager of the Environmental Health Division of the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. Wash hands before and after touching raw food, touching your face, or shaking someone’s hand.
- ✓ Wash and sanitize utensils and cutting boards after cutting raw meat.
- ✓ Keep the food prep area clean. “A lot of people use a sponge around the kitchen, doing dishes, then wiping the counters,” says Ludwig. “I personally don’t recommend using sponges in the kitchen.” If you use a sponge around the kitchen, microwave it for 30 to 40 seconds while it is still damp to kill germs, says Ludwig.
- ✓ Always use a clean plate and clean utensils when serving food.

Separate

- ✓ Use two cutting boards -- one for preparing raw meat, poultry and fish, and the other for cutting cooked food and preparing salads.

- ✓ Separate raw meats from other food in your shopping cart, grocery bags and refrigerator.
- ✓ When refrigerating, store all raw meats in a container or on a plate so juices don't drip on other food.

Cook

- ✓ Never cook a stuffed turkey or chicken in a microwave oven. Microwave cooking does not distribute heat evenly and can leave cold pockets inside the poultry.
- ✓ To ensure proper cooking temperature and reduce cross contamination, do not put stuffing in the turkey before cooking; cook stuffing separately.
- ✓ Use a cooking thermometer to determine if the turkey is fully cooked. The meat should reach 180 degrees Fahrenheit; if the bird is stuffed, the stuffing must reach at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
- ✓ When preparing eggnog, Caesar-salad dressing or other recipes that call for raw or undercooked eggs, use a pasteurized egg product instead of regular eggs.

Chill

- ✓ Do not allow any cooked food to sit out at room temperature for more than two hours. Leftovers should be refrigerated promptly after the meal.
- ✓ If you won't eat something within a day or two, freeze the leftovers. It's also a good idea to divide large amounts of leftovers into smaller portions for quick chilling. Leftover meat stored in the refrigerator should be eaten within three to four days.
- ✓ Reheat leftovers to 165 degrees throughout or until steaming hot. Soups, sauces and gravies should be brought to a rolling boil for at least one minute.
- ✓ Never taste leftover foods that look or smell strange. When in doubt, throw it out!

For more information about food safety, call the Environmental Services Department at: (602) 506-6616, or visit: www.maricopa.gov/envsvc .

For more information about stuffing food safety, go to:
http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Turkey_Basics_Stuffing/index.asp.

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